

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

NO. 164. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20, 1872.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

THE WICKED WOODS OF TOBEREEVIL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HESTER'S HISTORY."

CHAPTER XII. THE PEDLAR AT TOBEREEVIL.

In the mean time the pedlar was trudging through the woods towards the mansion of Tobereevil. He arrived at the back door, as a pedlar should arrive, and was confronted by Tibbie, who looked more hideous than usual in the full blaze of the evening sun.

"Go 'way out o' this!" was Tibbie's greeting. "We don't want no visitors here."

"Sorra visitor am I," said the pedlar, gaily; "so yer conscience may be at aise, ma'am."

"Nor stragglers nayther," said Tibbie, doggedly.

"Nor stragglers nayther," said the pedlar, "only havin' brought ye a few han'-some articles of dhress, ma'am."

Tibbie fell back, and gazed hungrily on the pedlar's bundle. She was well aware that she stood in need of some covering. She was clothed in rags, and the rags were beginning to threaten that they would no longer hold together. Something she must get, were it only a piece of sacking, against the winter. And pedlars had left off coming to Tobereevil. Did she let this one go he might never return.

"Come in, thin, will ye!" she said, gruffly, "an' show what ye have got. But I warn ye not to be axin' yer high prices, for we know the worth o' money about here, so we do."

The pedlar followed her down dark unwholesome passages into the kitchen. It was a vast underground chamber, paved

with black, reeking flags, its ceiling studded with hooks, from which no comfortable flitch was seen to swing. There were two great recesses in the wall, arched and chimneyed, holding enormous grates, which were eaten up with rust. Ovens and hot-plates stood idly about, broken, dilapidated, stuffed with rags and dirt. In one of the recesses a fire was burning on the flags, small and dwindling, fed by a few sticks of wood, and some stray scraps of turf. Before this fire a woodcock was roasting, dangling from a string. A rough wooden stool drawn up before the fire, and a one-pronged fork upon the flags, showed that Tibbie had been interrupted in her superintendence of the cookery.

"Be smart, my man, an' show us what ye've got; an' ye needn't be makin' eyes at the bird. It's for Simon's dinner; he shot it hissel'. An' Tibbie's got to dine off the bones."

"'Deed, thin, ma'am, ye're but a delicate ater to be livin' in sich a hungry part," said the pedlar, as he unrolled his pack. "But here's somethin'll give ye a relish for the feast. Here's a chintz'll make ye so beautiful your own friends won't know ye! Rale rich stuff! Flowers as big as taycups! An' all for no more nor fourpence a yard!"

Tibbie knotted her knuckles together to keep down her amazement, while she glugged her eyes upon the beauties of this bargain. It was many a day since she had dreamed of such a gown as that. At sight of it long dead memories of past fairs and dances, and youthful frolics, and blithe companions, got up and jostled each other through the old creature's brain.

"Ye'll make it twopence!" said the wily Tibbie.

"Sorra penny now undher fippence,"

said the pedlar, beginning with dignity to roll up the stuff. "When a lady doesn't know a bargain when she sees it, why it's part of my profession to tache her at a little inconvenience."

"Fourpence, ye said!"

"Fippence," said the pedlar.

"Oh, musha, musha, but ye're miserly an' hard! An' 'twas fourpence ye tould me at the first."

"If ye say another word I'll make it sixpence," said the pedlar.

Tibbie groaned and rocked herself, with her eyes upon the chintz. The material before her was worth eighteenpence a yard. Tibbie knew it well. It was strong and soft, and warm and silky; printed in good colours, and of the most brilliant design. Why the ordinary pedlar would not give her a calico at the price! But to part with so many fivepences cut Tibbie to the heart. And the thought of walking about To-bereevil, amidst the cobwebs and mildew, dressed out in all this finery, was like to make her crazy between horror and delight. And in the mean time, while she deliberated, the coveted stuff retreated, yard after yard, into the pedlar's pack.

"I'll be biddin' a good evenin' to ye," said the pedlar, shouldering his bundle.

"Stop! stop!" shrieked Tibbie, and she huddled herself away across the kitchen. She seized the poker, so that the pedlar thought at first that she was going to lay it about his head. But she only poked it up the chimney, bringing down a shower of soot, and a grimy little bag which chinked as it fell among the ashes.

"Wan, two, three, four!" said Tibbie, counting out her money. "Oh, my curse on you for a villain, would ye take it from me?"

The pedlar put the money in his pocket, Tibbie glaring at him strangely the while, as if she had given him poison, and he had swallowed it. The pedlar cut off the cloth, folded it neatly, and placed it in a roll in Tibbie's arms, where she gripped it and pinched it, so that had it been a living thing it certainly would have been strangled.

"Now, thin!" said the pedlar, "would you be lettin' the masther know that I am here?"

"The masther?"

"Misther Finiston hissel'."

"Ah, thin, young man, ye come a long piece out o' yer way to get yer head broke."

"Anan?" said the pedlar.

"Wid the poker, or the hind leg o' a chair," went on Tibbie. "There's no luck in axin' for a sight o' Simon's money."

"But I want to show him mine," said the pedlar.

"Is it laughin' at him ye are?"

"Sorra laugh in the matther. If so be he has anythin' to sell, old coats, or gownds, or curtains, or jewellery, why it's mysel' will give the best price for the goods."

"Sit down, thin, good man, an' wait a bit, for that's a quare different tune ye're whistlin' now. He's out gleanin', but he'll be in for his dinner by'n bye."

"Gleanin'?" asked the pedlar.

"Pickin' what he can get," returned Tibbie. "Sticks for the fire, an' wisps o' hay; wool out o' the hedges, an' odd praties an' turnips out o' the rigs."

The pedlar stared. "It amuses the ould sow!, I suppose," he said.

"Oh, ay!" said Tibbie, with a whine, "an' helps to keep the roof over his head, the crature!"

There was silence upon this, during which the black-beetles came a journey across the kitchen flags, and walked playfully over the pedlar's boots; while Tibbie went on with her cooking, making the woodcock spin giddily from its string as she basted it before the fire. She was considering whether the pedlar would buy the rags and bones which she had been storing in the cellar for the past ten years.

By-and-bye a sound was heard from above, and Tibbie left off torturing the woodcock, and placed him on a dish. A slice of bread and a glass of water were added on a tray, and then the miser's dinner was carried up-stairs.

"Ye may wait, my man," said Tibbie, coming back. And when the tray had come down again, she ushered the pedlar into the presence of her master.

He was sitting, all alive with expectation, in the dreary state of his dilapidated dining-room, a little leaner, more wrinkled, more surly and fretful-looking than on the day when he had scared Miss Martha out of his presence. In a corner of the room lay a small heap of the spoils which he had gleaned off the country since the morning.

"Take them away, Tibbie, take them away," he said, waving his hand towards the meagre pile, "and be careful about picking up the straws. They have cost me a hard day's work, good woman; and see that you do not lose the fruits of your master's toil. You perceive, young man, we will have no waste here, and I am glad

to learn that you are one of those who count nothing too old or decayed to be of use. I am told that you are anxious to do a little business with me, and that being so, we will proceed up-stairs."

The miser's nose was long, thin, and almost transparent, and as he spoke he sat sharpening the end of it—as it seemed to the looker-on—with a many-coloured rag, which had once been a pocket-handkerchief.

The pedlar stood, hat in hand, a little in the shadow thrown by the strong red sunset and the heavy oaken framework of the window. His attitude was respectful, but there was a strange look of loathing mixed with fear in his eyes, which now fixed themselves, as if fascinated, on the face of the miser, and now roved about the room.

"You will see a great house," said the miser, while he shuffled across the hall, looking nervously over his shoulder, as the keys jingled in his hand, "a dilapidated house, which the owner has no means of repairing. What it costs me, young man, to keep the holes in the windows stopped, so as to shut out the wind, and prevent the roof flying off on a stormy night—why, it makes me what I am," he said, flapping his patched garment ostentatiously. "It makes me what I am."

The first Finiston of Tobereevil, the man who had brought the blight upon his race, had had in his princely days a grand idea about the planning of a dwelling. The staircase was wide enough for eight men to ascend its black steps abreast. Inky faces of demons and satyrs grinned from among vine-leaves in the carvings of the balustrades. Black marble nymphs twined their arms and their hair round pillars on the landing, and lost themselves amid foliage and shadows. Formerly, all the sinister effect of this blackness had been carried off by the ruddy velvet hangings which had glowed between the arches, and the deeply-stained windows which had loaded every ray of sunlight with a special flush of colour. Flora and Bacchus had crowned themselves in the splendours of the illuminated glass, making the inner air warm with the reflection of their frolics. Their wreathed attendants had chased each other laughingly under the lower arches of the side-lights. Now Flora's azure robe still fluttered against the sun, and her feet still twinkled among clouds and roses. But her fair round throat had become a spike of ragged glass, and the sky looked in rudely where her

face had used to smile. Bacchus had had his lower limbs completely shivered away, and seemed to scar out of an intrusive bush of ivy. As the miser crept feebly up the staircase the scarlet midsummer sunset had assaulted all the colours in the window, flinging fire to right and left, and streaming triumphantly through the rents in the glass. The black nymphs were all burning as they clung round their pillars, each like an Indian widow upon her pyre.

From left and right of this landing another staircase led, one to each wing of the house. Simon turned to the left, and brought the pedlar along galleries and down passages, and up more stairs, till he reached a low-roofed lobby, where tall black presses were stationed like goblins in the mouldy twilight. To the locks of these he fitted one after another of his rusty keys, seeking for valuables which the pedlar was to buy of him. And meantime the pedlar had leisure to observe how the roof was broken in above the spot where they stood, and how the walls and the ceiling, and the presses and the floor, were all stained with rain-marks, as if the rain had poured in there many winters through.

"You perceive that we have got an enemy here," said the miser, with a dreary laugh. "But it will be a long time yet before he makes his way down to the lower rooms. We have damp down-stairs, plenty of damp, but never a pouring stream like this. It will suit me well to get rid of this property before next winter comes round."

The property was dragged out, and proved to be some faded garments, stained with rain, and eaten up with mildew. They were shrunk and discoloured; past all recognition of shape or hue. The mice had dined off them at many a hungry pinch, and the moths had made pasture of them for years. That one fine lady of Tobereevil, while sweeping her satin skirts down the sumptuous staircase below, and counting herself the first of a race of queens, had little thought that her faded finery would be thus preserved in the family, and bargained over by her descendants, after she and her expectations had long melted into the churchyard mould. Yet there it lay, exposed in its ghastly uncleanness; and this pedlar was to purchase it, and take it forth into the world.

The pedlar stood in a recess between two of the presses, and close to his head there was a tiny window. Through this loop-hole he could see far over the country.

He could see a large portion of the estate of Tobereevil, a few hovels, a few sickly wreaths of smoke, vast rich tracts of uncultivated land, melancholy fallows, and the strong, brilliant woods. The whole was a picture of neglected land, rich in beauty and glowing with promise, but with the shadow of the curse distinct upon its face amidst all the splendours of the midsummer sunset. The pedlar gazed long, as if he had forgotten his bargain, and that lively sauciness which was his business expression did not find its way through the bitterness on his face.

"You will understand that I expect a good price for these articles," said the miser's voice, recalling him to business. "They are rich and fine, and of most costly materials. They will bear cleaning, dyeing, remodelling, patching—ah! there is no end to the benefits which their owner will find in them."

The pedlar turned round, and saw the figure of the old man bending and moving as he shook out, straightened, folded, and flaunted his gaudy and unseemly rags, and turning from the dreary landscape, and meeting this more dismal and ludicrous picture, a look of horror and disgust burned gradually in the pedlar's gaze.

"Name your price, and don't keep me in suspense," said the miser, irritably, and suddenly raised his greedy eyes, and peered into the pedlar's face. Then, as if he could hear no more, and with a glance of terror, the pedlar raised both his arms hurriedly, and pushed the miser from him, swiftly and strongly, but with nothing violent in his touch; turned from him without a word, and fled along the lobby, past the goblin presses, and down the staircase, and to left and to right, mistaking his way, and finding it again, escaping at last out of the door, and away into the woods of Tobereevil.

"Stop thief! stop thief!" shrieked Simon, pattering after him a little way, then coming back to see that nothing had been taken, then following again with his cry, unconvinced, "Stop thie—ief!" And Tibbie at last caught the sound in her dungeon underground, and came running and stumbling up-stairs. But when the two old creatures met, panting and vociferating in the hall, they were obliged to declare to each other that the pedlar had vanished, and that he was the devil, a gipsy, or a thief at the least.

Yet after this they found his pack lying untouched in the dining-room, together

with the money which Tibbie had paid him for her dress. And in wrangling over the contents of the bundle they had ample occupation for the rest of the evening.

CHAPTER XIII. TROUBLED IN HER MIND.

It was a moment of some excitement to May when she climbed into the great travelling-carriage of the Archbolds, and was taken from the gate of Monasterlea. Miss Martha inspected her departure with pride.

"I have done my best to turn her out like a gentlewoman," thought that kindly spinster, "and, let them have whom they may, they can never see a sweeter face at their board. Ah, deary me! why does Paul not come home while she is looking like that?"

And Miss Martha returned to her lonely parlour to follow out the train of this idea, with her knitting in her lap, her spectacles on her nose, and her mouth at a reflective angle. She had been busy as a bee for the past few days, but now the delicate laces were all cleared and pressed, the fair muslin gowns were all folded, the little knots and rosettes of gay ribbons were all stitched in their places, the excitement of trunk-packing had come to an end, and the humdrum knitting had returned to its place between Miss Martha's fingers. Her child was gone, but though Monasterlea might be sleepier and lonelier than ever, Miss Martha was neither sleepy nor lonely. She was accustomed to live out a great deal of life within her twenty-four hours, and she could live it out as well in her silent parlour, over a silent occupation, as though she had been haranguing a multitude, or ploughing the rustiest fallow on Mr. Finiston's estate. It was a gift that she had got in the order of charity, this unflagging vitality, which would not be unoccupied. It had lit a comfortable hearth in this ruin surrounding her, it managed her farm, made a pride of her meadow-grass, drew beauty and fatness from her garden and dairy, and made a pleasant proverb of her house-keeping. When constrained to be quiet she could employ her energy in planning good things for other people. There were many within her reach who were worthy of a thought, and very many more who were in need of it. And when all those were reckoned there was not found one who was not infinitely the better when the fruit of such remembrance was dropped, ripe and unexpected, into his lap. Was there thirst, or hunger, or nakedness, or repining hiding itself in anguish in the holes of the land?

The trouble was a lion, and Miss Martha was but a mouse, but a mouse who never left off gnawing at the nets and the chains.

On the present occasion Miss Martha was thinking about Paul. She could not tell why, but she had thought a great deal about the young man lately. For the past few days he had scarcely for a moment been absent from her mind. She had dreamed about him every night, and she had talked about little else every day. This was the more remarkable, as a new event ought to have sent all her ideas in the direction of Camlough. Miss Martha was fully aware of the important step that was taken when an attractive young girl like May was sent to establish a friendly footing in a house like that of the Archbolds, where she should be admired, and coveted, and taught the ways of the world. Miss Martha's pride on this point knew no bounds. A stray duke might find his way to Camlough, and might want to place his coronet on May's simple brow. Well, and was it for her own desolation upon the consummation of such an event that Miss Martha could fret over her knitting? Was it for her own sake that she cherished so fierce an enmity towards that imaginary duke? No; there was nothing about that. It was Paul who would be defrauded, Paul who would be wronged. Miss Martha, I have hinted, was a faithful soul, and she had accepted Paul Finiston as the son of her heart. Whilst his mother had lived he had been nothing to her, but his mother was dead, and he was second with her now; and Miss Martha's second was far better than very many people's first. It was an object of her life to bring him home from his wandering to pet him, to worship him, to watch over his interests, and constrain fortune, if it might be, to relinquish her old grudge against his family, and to shower favours for the future upon this innocent head. And in order that her heart might not be divided, she would make her first and her second into one precious whole, so that one could not hurt the other, whilst she herself must be just to both. Thus best would she pay her debt to the dead Elizabeth. Yet here, and amid these day-dreams, was May, with all her sweetness, whirled away into the chances of the world, and Paul beyond seas, and that imaginary duke coming post-haste to Camlough. So Miss Martha might have guessed very well how for the past few days she had been thinking so incessantly of Paul. Now, when she was alone, she

drew his last letter from the pocket of her apron, and spread it upon her knees, and read it many times. There was not one word in the whole about coming home.

In the mean time May had passed over the rim of the Golden Mountain, and forgotten her own identity in marvelling at the beauty of the world. This midsummer eve seemed like to be the first of a new era in her life. The oxen planted their feet on the steep pavement, the carriage slid slowly from brae to brae, and from hillock to hillock, moors, fens, and lakes shimmered and burned in the sun, and shifted with a magical intermingling of lines and hues, floating off in flecks of blue and silver, and amethyst and amber, to become mere pencillings of tinted glory in the distance. In the midst of all this flush of nature on went May like a queen of summer upon a royal progress, with golden weeds brushing her cheeks, and crimson berries dropping ripe into her hands. Till the castle appeared in sight, and then a little accident occurred.

A shrill wailing sound had been for some minutes coming from a distance towards the carriage.

Accustomed to the strange cries of birds and shepherds, May did not mind it; neither did the coachman nor the drivers of the oxen. At last it arose out of a bush above their heads.

"Aye—aye—aye—aye—aye!"

This was a human voice, and, moreover, there was a white pocket-handkerchief waving madly from the point of a very long umbrella. Yet no human being was to be seen.

"It's a banshee!" murmured one of the men who led the oxen. "Go on, ye baste!" he said, whacking the animals in trepidation.

"Ye idiot! don't ye see it's a lady in distress!" thundered down one of the coachmen from his perch upon the box.

A figure had appeared upon the bank above, looming largely against the sky. It was dressed in a long dark gown, a scarlet shawl, and a white kerchief over the head and under the chin. The face was long and fat, and suffering from recent sunburn. The arms were waved with tragic appeal towards the travellers.

"It's Mrs. Lee, a lady from the castle, miss," said the coachman, touching his hat to May. "It's likely she wants a sate in the carriage. Lost herself, I suppose, she has. Ye've no objections, miss? Yes, ma'am, comin', ma'am. Lane on me,

ma'am! Oh, begorra, you'll have to come an' help us, Darby! Press yer weight betune the two of uz, ma'am! it'll balance betther. Now, sl—ither down, ma'am, and ye'll come safe to the botthom!" And the tall, stout lady was fairly dragged down the sandstone cliff, and deposited panting on the road.

She looked helpless, travel-soiled, and weary. Tears and dust were mingled in her eyes.

"My dear ma'am," she said piteously to May, "I beg your pardon, but I am obliged to intrude."

"Not at all," said May. "I shall be glad of a companion."

"Thank you, thank you, thank you!" gasped Mrs. Lee all round, as the men once more put their hands under her elbows and hoisted her respectfully into the carriage.

"A-a-ah!" she groaned, sinking back into the seat, and sitting upon May, and unfurling a large umbrella against the sun. "My dear ma'am, I am exceedingly obliged to you. We cannot be introduced till we get to the castle. You are particular in these countries, and that is quite proper. But in the mean time might we not have a little conversation?"

"I should be very glad of it," said May.

"A-ah!" groaned Mrs. Lee again. "If you had been lost on the hills ever since breakfast time this morning you would not be a very entertaining companion. You would be hungry and tired, and in bad humour, like me."

Mrs. Lee's long, smooth face was chiefly expressive of softness and feebleness. She had great brown eyes, full of meek and irritating patience. She had a complaining voice, and her words fell out of her mouth as if the wires that managed her speaking were out of order. She had come from America, but it was not very clear to what country she belonged. She had not the smartness of an American, nor the elegance of an Englishwoman, nor yet the liveliness and humour of an Irishwoman. She was not exactly coarse or vulgar, but she was heavy and unrefined. Her accent was of no nation, and her manners were peculiarly her own. She had been heard to address Sir John as "My dear ma'am." It seemed odd that this lady should be a guest at Camlough, but she was Christopher's mother, and this was Katherine's doing.

May was naturally wondering what could have brought this good lady so high up on the hills, alone and without her

bonnet. Her figure did not seem suited to climbing or jumping, yet to enjoy solitude on the braes of Camlough climbing and jumping were indispensable accomplishments.

"You will be quite surprised at finding me here," said Mrs. Lee, answering her thought. "But, my dear ma'am, a troubled mind will not let a person rest. It walks one about. It gets one into scrapes. What I would give for leave to sit and rest myself a whole long day, my dear ma'am—I could not describe it to you!"

May murmured something to the effect that she was sorry to learn that Mrs. Lee was troubled in her mind.

"My dear ma'am," said Mrs. Lee, "troubled is no word for it. Tortured is a more natural expression."

This was said with such earnestness, and with such a face of distress, that May became sympathising, and looked so.

"A-ah! Tortured is the word. And there has been no one to confide in here. The truth is, I am afraid of her ladyship. And besides, how could I speak to her on such a subject? I have already appealed to the girl herself, but she is as hard as flint, and as wicked as a witch. And Christopher is mad and blind. My dear ma'am, my son is being ruined before my eyes."

May at this point got a lively fear that the lady beside her was a little more than troubled in her mind. A marriage with the beautiful and wealthy Katherine seemed the strangest disguise in which ruin could attack a young man.

"I hope you are mistaken," she said.

"Well, well! This is no place for entering into particulars," Mrs. Lee said, waving her umbrella towards the coachman. "Another time I will pour out my troubles to you."

Here the carriage swept round before the castle entrance, and May had hardly time to protest that she was the very worst person in the world for a confidante. Figures were scattered on the lawn, watching for the travellers. Sir John welcomed May very kindly as his special guest; Lady Archbold gave her the outside of her cheek and the tips of her fingers, and Katherine embraced her. The greetings were made in the midst of laughter. Scouts had been sent to the hills in search of Mrs. Lee.

"Go away, young man," said that lady to the footman, "I will have my own son to help me out."

Christopher stepped forth with a good enough grace, blushing, smiling, and knit-

ting his brows. He was fond of his mother, and anxious to be good to her, but she was apt to try his patience before strangers.

"Why do you go roving about the hills like a gipsy, mother?" he said, deprecatingly, as she leaned on his shoulder, and heaved herself slowly to the ground.

"Why?" she said, turning upon him with meek wrath. "To keep you from harm if I can. But it seems I might as well stay at home."

"Quite as well," said Christopher, with angry eyes, and then laughed foolishly, and told his mother to go in and dress; that she was a dear old goose, and made great mistakes.

OLD STORIES RE-TOLD.

HOW AN EARL WAS HANGED.

In the year 1758 the tongues of Leicestershire gossips were busy with the wild doings and extraordinary behaviour of Laurence Shirley, the fourth Earl Ferrers, who lived at Staunton-Harold, near Ashby-de-la-Zouch, on the Staffordshire borders of Leicestershire.

The house of Ferrers boasted the bluest blood in Leicestershire, however much it had corrupted in the person of the turbulent and savage-tempered master of Staunton. The family, sprung from the royal Plantagenets, had fought and governed in England for generations. One sturdy ancestor, struck down beside the king's standard at the great battle of Shrewsbury, in the early part of the reign of Henry the Fourth, has been immortalised by Shakespeare. The second baronet of the family, Sir Henry Shirley, married one of the daughters of the last favourite of Elizabeth, the Earl of Essex. The son of Henry, Sir Robert Shirley, was kept close in the Tower by Cromwell for his obstinate adherence to the cause of Charles the First. Sir Robert's second son was summoned to parliament by Charles the Second, in reward for his father's loyalty, by the title of Lord Ferrers, of Chartley, as the descendant of one of the coheiresses of Robert, Earl of Essex, the title having been in abeyance since the head of Essex fell on the Tower Hill scaffold, and the precedence having been suspended since the reign of Edward the First. In 1711, Queen Anne created Robert Lord Ferrers, Viscount Tamworth, and Earl Ferrers. This nobleman had ruled over vast domains, but they were much reduced by being sub-

divided between his fifteen sons and twelve daughters, the abundant progeny of two wives. The first earl's titles fell to his second son, but he dying without issue, they passed to the next surviving brother, the ninth son, and he never marrying, they came eventually to the tenth son, the father of the unfortunate earl who ended his mis-spent life at Tyburn.

This unhappy nobleman—a man of violent passions—had a clear intellect and acknowledged abilities, when his brain was not sodden with wine and brandy. Then he became a madman, whom wealth and power only rendered more dangerous. In 1752 he married Mary, the daughter of Amos Melville, Esquire. (This lady afterwards married a brother of the Duke of Argyll.) Towards his wife the earl behaved with insane barbarity. A single instance of his groundless cruelty and ferocity will suffice. Lord Ferrers's brother and his wife were paying a visit at Staunton-Harold, and some dispute arose between the two gentlemen. One day, the countess being absent from the room, the earl rushed up-stairs with a large clasp-knife in his hand, and asked a servant whom he met where his lady was. The man replied, "In her own room," upon which Lord Ferrers ordered him to load a brace of pistols and follow him. The man obeyed the order, but, apprehensive of mischief, put no priming to the pistols. Lord Ferrers discovering this, swore at him, and taking the powder primed the pistols himself. He then threatened that if the man did not immediately go and shoot his brother, the captain, he would blow his brains out. The servant naturally hesitating to obey this order, the earl pulled the trigger of one of the pistols, but luckily it missed fire. The countess, coming in at this juncture, threw herself on her knees, and begged him to restrain his passion. The earl, brandishing the other pistol, sullenly swore at her, and threatened to blow her brains out if she continued to vex and thwart him. The servant, taking advantage of this lull to escape from the room, and running pale and scared to the captain's bedroom, reported to him all that had passed. Upon which the captain very wisely made his wife get up and dress herself, and they both left the house instantly, though it was then only two o'clock in the morning.

On all occasions when annoyed the earl flew into tremendous rages with his servants, and cuffed and beat them as if they had been slaves or convicts. On one oc-

casion, some oysters sent from London arriving tainted, the earl ordered one of his men to swear before the magistrates that the carrier had confessed to changing the barrels. The servant respectfully declining to take any such oath, the earl burst into one of his whirlwinds of passion, flew at the man, stabbed him in the breast with a knife, cut his head with a silver candlestick, and kicked him so terribly that he suffered for several years afterwards.

In 1756, the earl's temper was again at blood heat. At the Derby races he cruelly ran a mare (then in foal) against the horse of a Captain M. for fifty pounds, and won. In the evening over the wine, the captain, laughing about the earl's mare, offered to run his horse against her again at the end of seven months. Lord Ferrers, enraged at what his wild temper at once suspected to be a prearranged insult, instantly, though it was three o'clock in the morning, left Derby, and posted to his seat at Staunton-Harold. The next morning, as soon as he awoke, he tore at his bedroom bell, and called for his groom. He asked how Captain M. came to be told that the mare that ran at Derby was in foal. The groom denied that he had ever told any one about the mare. The next day the earl waited in vain for the captain and the rest of his Derby friends, whom he had insulted, and who naturally refused to expose themselves to fresh annoyances. Lord Ferrers, enraged at finding that no one came, fell on his footmen, and, rushing among them furious as Herod among the innocents, kicked and horsewhipped them all round, and threw everything at them that he could lift.

The natural end of the earl's mad rages was the divorce sued for and obtained by his long-suffering wife in 1758. Horace Walpole, writing to his crony and gossip, Sir Horace Mann, then at Florence, dilates of course upon the earl's divorce, and mentions some particulars of the earl's extraordinary conduct on the occasion, when he dared not throw boot-jacks at the counsel, or decanters at the judges. He did not attend the trial, in fact, at all, but, probably to affect a contemptuous indifference, rode the same day to Hertford assizes, to prosecute Page, a well-known highwayman, who had recently robbed him.

The disgrace and vexation attending the divorce seem to have pushed the earl just that step further which tumbled him over the precipice of madness. His paroxysms of passion grew more frequent and still

more beyond his control. Whatever his fury suggested as such times, he at once endeavoured to effect. Taking lodgings at Muswell Hill, he one Sunday, in a momentary caprice, sent off a mounted messenger post-haste for a favourite mare which he had intrusted to the care of the landlord of a neighbouring inn. The messenger found the family absent; and, moreover, as the boy who kept the keys was also at church, the stable where the mare was could not be entered. On hearing this, the earl blazed up into madness, snatched up a swordstick, and, arming two of his servants with guns and sledge-hammers, hurried away to the inn. There meeting the landlord, the earl wounded him with his sword-cane, knocked down the frightened landlady, broke down the stable-doors, and carried off the mare in maniacal triumph. Yet in this same inn the earl frequently lodged, revelling with the village toppers, alternately threatening and treating them; drinking scalding coffee out of the spout of a coffee-pot; breaking rows of glasses, and often threatening to smash the landlord's bureau and throttle the landlady. In calmer moments he was despondent, lamented his fits of rage, and begged people not to be offended with his ways.

In 1760, the trustees under the act of separation proposed Mr. Johnson, the earl's steward, as the receiver of rents for the countess's use. This Mr. Johnson had been bred up in the family from his youth, and was distinguished for his regularity in accounts, for his general respectability and tried fidelity. With an instinctive presentiment of evil, Johnson at first declined the trust, till specially urged to take it by his master, for at this time Johnson stood very high in the earl's opinion. They soon, however, became the deadliest of enemies, for Johnson refusing to in any way falsify the accounts, the earl swore at him for having been a witness for the countess at the trial for divorce, and for having lent his unhappy wife in her need fifty pounds.

The earl soon began to accuse Johnson of treachery, especially of having combined with the trustees to disappoint him of a contract for certain coal mines; he also attempted with might and main to turn him out of an advantageous farm, half a mile from Staunton-Harold, which he held under his lordship, but the trustees renewing the lease, the earl was baffled. This repulse raised the madman's passions to the last degree. Fired with drink, he now bent himself to murder. With all the

cunning of insanity the earl behaved to the faithful steward with great affability, and transacted business with him without reproaches or angry remonstrances. The family at Staunton-Harold, during this fatal lull, consisted of Mrs. Clifford, the earl's mistress, her four daughters, three men-servants, an old man, a boy, and three maids. On Sunday, January the 13th, 1760, the earl rode up quietly to the door of Johnson, who lived about half a mile from the hall, and, with his usual brusque voice and manner, desired him to come to Staunton between three and four o'clock in the afternoon of the following Friday. On the day named, just after the two o'clock dinner of the family, Lord Ferrers went into the still-house, a semi-detached building, where Mrs. Clifford and the children lodged, and sent her for a walk to her father's house, two miles off. He then sent all the men-servants away on some fool's errand or other. Mrs. Clifford and the children were not to return till half-past five. He had a clear field in which to carry out his no doubt long-matured purpose. The three maids could not stay his arm, and would be too frightened even to spread an alarm in the outbuildings.

At the appointed hour the unconscious steward arrived at the house prepared for his slaughter. Elizabeth Burgham, the maid, smilingly let him in, and showed him to the door of his lordship's room.

Lord Ferrers sullenly came to the door, and ordered the steward to go and wait in the still-house. In about ten minutes Lord Ferrers came out, called the steward into his room, and at once, to his surprise, locked the door, and took out the key. Hitherto Johnson had felt no alarm; but now he saw the earl's face darken, and his brow knit, as the earl turned on him angrily, ordering him at once to pay certain disputed sums, and, after curses and threats, producing a prepared paper, "a confession of villany," as he called it, which he insisted on Johnson then and there signing. The steward refused to sign any such document, and, half angry, half alarmed, expostulated and declared his innocence of any evil intention against his lordship. But the madness of revenge had entire rule now over that infirm and fierce nature. The earl, snatching a loaded pistol from the deep side-pocket of his square-cut laced coat, cocked it and presented it, shouting, "Kneel down."

The astonished man, afraid to refuse, knelt on one knee.

"Down on your other knee," roared the earl, so loud as to be heard in the kitchen. "Down, and declare what you have done against Lord Ferrers. Your time is come. You must die."

Then he fired. The pistol-ball entered the steward's body just under the last false rib, and penetrated the bowels. Johnson did not fall, but, pale and suffering, staggered to a seat, uttering groans and appeals for mercy. Lord Ferrers drew out a second loaded pistol, still shouting to the dying man to sign the paper, but did not fire again. In about twenty minutes or so he grew calm enough to unlock the door, go into the passage and call out, "Who is there?" to the frightened women who had huddled together for safety in the wash-house. On the boldest and most compassionate of them coming to where the wounded man sat, pressing his side and groaning, he sent her at once for some one to help in getting the steward up-stairs to bed. Lord Ferrers, who, wonderful to relate, was perfectly sober, now despatched a mounted messenger for Mr. Kirkland, a surgeon of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, two miles distant, and then went himself up to the wounded man, whom the maid was tending, and asked him how he found himself. The steward faintly replied that he was dying, and begged his murderer to send for his children. Lord Ferrers at once sent for the steward's daughter. On her arrival Lord Ferrers sent one of the maids up with her to her father's room, and soon after followed himself, in great perturbation, being now fully conscious of the danger. Johnson being nearly insensible, Lord Ferrers pulled down the clothes and sponged the orifice of the wound with arquebusade water. Then he went down-stairs, and drank himself drunk with great draughts of beer. The messenger soon after returned with the surgeon, to whom Lord Ferrers frankly confessed his violence, but said he thought Johnson was more frightened than hurt.

"I intended," he said, "to have shot him dead, for he was a villain, and deserved to die; but now I have spared his life, I desire you to do what you can for him."

He also declared that no one should lay hands on him, and that he would shoot dead whoever attempted it. Mr. Kirkland, knowing the man's fiery temper, and seeing that he was partly drunk, assured him that there was no danger, and that no violence would be offered him. On the surgeon probing the wound, Lord Ferrers produced the pistol, described the direc-

tion in which he had held it, and expressed surprise that the bullet should have lodged at all, as only a few days before a ball from the same pistol had gone through an inch-and-a-half plank. The surgeon then went down-stairs to prepare dressings, and the earl went back again to his beer jug. As he got more and more drunk, fits of compassion alternated with storms of rage and pangs of fear, till his reason seemed almost tottering. He lamented his rage, then trembled for himself, and the next moment was rushing up-stairs to Johnson's room to rouse the dying man, to pull his legs, to try to tear off the bed-clothes, and to threaten to shoot "the villain" through the head, all the while at intervals promising to maintain Johnson's daughter and the whole family if they would promise not to prosecute. Mrs. Clifford, who had returned, alarmed at the earl's violence, and afraid of further ill consequences, suggested that poor Johnson should be removed to his own house, but that set Lord Ferrers again raging, and he screamed: "He shall not be moved. I will keep him here to plague the villain!"

Between eleven and twelve the murderer went gloomily to bed, entreating the surgeon to make things all right, and, above all, to prevent his being seized, especially leaving word to see him in the morning, however early he left. In the night the doctor began to foresee new dangers with the next daylight. In fresh ravings the earl might shoot Johnson as he lay in bed, or, what was even worse (from his the doctor's point of view), he might, if the steward died at the hall, shoot him (the doctor) for having let the man die. So, in the darkness, Kirkland stole off to the steward's house, and rigged up an easy-chair, with side poles, as a sedan. About two o'clock in the morning Johnson was quietly removed. The poor fellow lingered till nine in the morning, and then expired.

The news of the crime and its results aroused the neighbours, who armed themselves and bore down on the hall. As they crowded murmuring into the court-yard, the earl, half dressed, his stockings down, and carrying his garters in his hand, passed towards the stable as if to take horse and fly, the news of the steward's death having no doubt already reached him. A bold Leicestershire man, named Springthorpe, at once pushed to the front, and presenting a pistol, summoned the madman to surrender. The earl, however, putting his hand in his pocket as if to pull out a pistol,

alarmed Springthorpe, who knew the man, and as he stepped back among his friends, the earl ran again into the house, bolted all the doors, and apparently prepared for a desperate resistance. The angry crowd blockaded his house, but no one appeared. About two hours after, however, the earl thrust his wild face out of a garret window, and called out, "How is Johnson?" Springthorpe shouted up the terrible words, "He is dead." The earl replied, "You're a liar, d— you. I'll believe nobody but Kirkland."

On being solemnly assured that the steward was dead, the earl at last desired the people to disperse, and he would surrender. The next moment, with all a madman's desultoriness, he asked some one to bring him some meat and wine. Then cursing every one in a sudden rage, he said he would not be taken at all, and, slamming the window, disappeared.

Two hours later the earl was seen strutting about his bowling-green, probably quite drunk by this time, and armed with a huge bell-mouthed blunderbuss, two or three pistols, and a dagger. They closed in upon him, however, and Austin, a collier, resolutely ran in at him and seized him, without even a shot being fired, or any scuffle taking place. The moment his hands were tied he began to glory in the fact of having, as he said, killed a villain. He was taken to Ashby-de-la-Zouch and locked up in a public-house till the coroner's jury brought in a verdict of "wilful murder," when the earl was driven off to Leicester Jail. A fortnight later Lord Ferrers was taken to London in his own landau, dressed like a jockey, in a close riding-frock, jockey boots, cap, and a plush shirt.

The House of Peers committed the murderer to the Tower. He was placed in a round building near the drawbridge, and strictly guarded. Two warders constantly attended in his room: a third waited at the door. At the bottom of the stairs, two soldiers stood with fixed bayonets, and one sentinel paced at the door of the tower. The great gates were shut an hour before the usual time while this miserable criminal remained a prisoner. Mrs. Clifford and her children came up to town and lodged in Tower-street, but the interchanged messages became at last so troublesome to the warders that they had to be restricted to one letter a day. His children were occasionally allowed to see him. The earl lived regularly, and drank his quart of wine a day. His behaviour in general was rea-

sonable, but at times, when denouncing the murdered steward, his passion broke all bounds.

The trial of Lord Ferrers took place at Westminster Hall on the 16th of April, 1760, Lord Henley (afterwards Earl of Northington), the Chancellor, presiding as high steward over the one hundred and forty peers present. The criminal, "bad and villanous in figure," as Horace Walpole says, pleaded insanity, against his own inclination, to please his family. The earl's two brothers attended to prove lunacy in the blood.

The plea of madness not holding, the worthless earl was found guilty by the unanimous voice of his peers, and was sentenced to be duly hung, like any low-bred cut-throat, and afterwards to be anatomised, on the 21st of April. He was afterwards respited till the 5th of May. While awaiting his sentence, Lord Ferrers did the little he could to atone for his crime by leaving thirteen hundred pounds in India bonds to the children of Mr. Johnson: a just legacy, that nevertheless remained long unpaid. He also left sixty pounds a year to Mrs. Clifford, and one thousand pounds to each of his natural daughters. He petitioned very hard to be beheaded in private on Tower Green; but with this request King George very properly refused to comply. His legacies were, however, permitted to be held as legal.

In prison the earl now drank as much as he could get, and continued to act in a way that bordered as nearly as possible on madness. The very night that sentence was passed, he played at piquet, for money, with the warders, and would have remained all night over the cards had they not refused to play after midnight. On the governor lessening his rather excessive allowance of wine, the earl artfully consented to an interview with one of his brothers, his only object being to get his brother to intercede for more claret. The moment this request was granted, the earl said coolly to his brother: "Now is as good a time as any to take leave of you—adieu!"

So the door closed upon the brother for ever, and the mad earl shuffled the cards, cut for a new deal, and went gaily on with his piquet.

The earl's aunt, that excellent woman the Countess of Huntingdon, the great patroness of Whitfield, frequently visited the prisoner in the Tower, but nothing could restore his

mind to a rational balance, or soften his bull-dog heart. He told the chaplain frankly that he was a deist, and could not believe in justification by faith. He boasted that he had never led the faith of any one astray. He thought all persons who assailed the religion of a country enemies of society, and he blamed Lord Bolingbroke for disseminating sceptical theories. As for Johnson, he said the affair was under peculiar circumstances, and he had met with so many crosses and vexations that he scarcely knew what he did, but he was graciously pleased to say that he bore no malice against the unfortunate man. The chaplain finally hinted something about the world requiring satisfaction.

"Sir," replied the earl, with allowable impatience, and more good sense than usual, "sir, what have I to do now with the world? I am going to pay a forfeit life. What do I care what the world thinks of me?"

The morning of the execution he began the following lines, when the warders, coming to tell him his carriage was ready, interrupted the composition:

In doubt I live, in doubt I die,
Yet undismayed the vast abyss I'll try;
And plunge into eternity
Through rugged paths.

The next earl who is hung may perhaps carry on the poem. About nine A.M. the procession left the Tower-gate. First came a body of constables to clear a passage through the dense crowd, patrols of horse and foot guards followed; then came the sheriff's carriage, the horses decorated with ribbons. Last of all came Lord Ferrers in his own landau, drawn by six horses, his old coachman crying all the way, and almost unable to drive. The earl was dressed in his wedding suit of white silk, richly embroidered with silver—a costume, as he said bitterly, "as fit for one day as the other." When he saw the vast crowd jostling all the way up Holborn and the Oxford-road, he remarked calmly: "Ah! I suppose they never saw a lord hanged before."

At the Tower-gate Mr. Sheriff Vaillant, a French bookseller, with many apologies, took his seat in the landau. "It was very disagreeable to him," he said, with perfect good manners, "to wait on his lordship on so awful an occasion, but he would endeavour to render his situation as agreeable as possible." Earl Ferrers asked the polite sheriff if he had ever seen such a crowd before. The sheriff had not. The

mob was so great that it took the landau three hours to reach the Tyburn fields.

At St. Giles's the earl wanted to stop and have a draught of wine-and-water, but the sheriff suggested that the halt would only draw together an unmanageable crowd, and Lord Ferrers replied: "That is true. I say no more. By no means stop."

He then remarked that the antecedents of death were more terrible than death itself. There was a scaffold covered with black baize under the scaffold in honour of the criminal, and the place where the earl was to stand to die was eighteen inches higher than the rest. At the gallows he expressed a wish to bid Mrs. Clifford farewell, but the sheriff, suggesting it might unman him, the earl replied: "If you, sir, think I am wrong, I submit."

He then gave the sheriff a pocket-book containing a bank-note, and a ring, and a purse of guineas for Mrs. Clifford. A troop of horse quite unnecessarily formed a circle round the man, whom not one person in the crowd had the slightest desire to rescue. The criminal ascended the black steps calm and collected, and joined the chaplain in repeating the Lord's Prayer, which he stopped to pronounce a fine composition, and he uttered the words, "O Lord forgive me all my errors, pardon all my sins," with great fervour. He then presented his watch to the sheriff, and, by mistake, gave five guineas (for your hanging was then an expensive luxury) to the assistant-executioner, which led to an unseemly wrangling between the two learned legal functionaries, which must have almost upset the earl's temper for the last time at the unbearable delay of business. Lord Ferrers was the first sufferer by the new drop, just then introduced in place of the barbarous cart, ladder, and mediaeval three-cornered gibbet, such as Hogarth has shown us in the last scene of the Idle Apprentice. The earl's neckcloth being removed, and a white cap drawn from his pocket and put on, his arms were bound with a black sash, and the halter slipped round his bull neck.

During the hour and a half that the earl's body hung, the sheriff and some friends quietly partook of a cosy little lunch. The body was then placed in a coffin lined with quilted white satin, and conveyed to Surgeon's Hall to be dissected. The surgeons universally declared that they had never seen greater promise of long life in anybody that had come under

their notice. The earl, in his laced white silk coat, was placed upright in his coffin as in a sentry-box, and remained for some time, under care of a sentinel, under the inspection of a curious crowd. His lordship's cocked-hat and the severed rope were laid at his feet. On the lid of the coffin the eager crowds read these words:

"Laurence Earl Ferrers, suffered May 5th, 1760."

LOVE'S DANGER.

A sudden glance, a hint no others guess,
The sweet soft subtle cadence of a word,
And all the surface of a life is stirred
To the light rippling waves of happiness.

A jarring jest, an act unseen or slighted,
A shy allusion missed, a mocking smile;
And joy and hope and peace so glad erewhile,
Shrink back like April buds by east winds blighted.

Ah, mighty arbiters of heart and life,
Ye loved ones! know your sceptre's boundless sway;
Nor in a careless hour fling gems away,
Whose worth would buckler you through storm and strife.

The flowers of joy as fragile are, as fair;
The leaves may wither, though the roots endure;
Let Love's strong hand their first bright bloom secure,
Or dread to lose the tender glory there.

THE IDLE LAKE.

HE who is acquainted with the Idle Lake should be thoroughly versed in the topography of mythical localities—should be familiar with the Bower of Bliss, the House of Fame, and the Cave of Despair—with Doubting Castle, Vanity Fair, and the Valley of the Shadow—with the Debateable Land, and the Islands of the Blest—with Armida's Garden, and that fearfully beautiful Arbour of Proserpine, where nothing but that which was noxious grew. All these legendary regions should strengthen in the beholder the love and wonderment which, as a confirmed lotus-eater, an inveterate truant, and an incorrigible sluggard, he should feel for the Idle Lake.

It is situated—anywhere; and why not in Fairyland? Why should I not chronicle its bearings, thus? Once upon a time a certain Sir Cymochles, a mailed knight certainly, who had the privilege of the entrée at Arthur's Court on levee days, whatever the privilege of the entrée may mean, but otherwise of no very bright repute, was wandering up and down "miscellaneously" (a common practice in Faëry), accompanied by one Atin, a person of unquestionably bad character, and in quest of another chi-

valrous person, hight Sir Guyon, with the wicked intent him to kill and slay. Sir Cymochles, on this felonious errand bent, chanced to come to a river, and, moored by the bank thereof, what should he discern but a little "gondelay," or gondola, spick and span, shining like a new pin, and so trimly bedecked with boughs and cunningly woven arbours, that the tiny cabin at the stern looked like a floating forest. In this delightful wherry there sat a lady fair to see, gaily dressed, and with a quantity of wild flowers in her hair. She was seemingly of a frivolous and irreverent temperament, and (the legends say) sat in the gondola grinning like a Cheshire cat. When she ceased to grin, she giggled, or hummed a refrain from some idle ditty. Now Sir Cymochles was desirous of passing to the other side of the river, and he asked the giggling lady if she would give him a cast across. Said the lady tittering, "As welcome, Sir Knight, as the flowers in May;" but she was not so ready to oblige Atin: stoutly, indeed, refusing him boat-room. Possibly she doubted his capacity to trim the boat properly, or haply she thought that he could not pay the ferry fee. So Atin was, like Lord Ullin in the ballad, "left lamenting" on the shore, and Sir Cymochles, with the grinning lady, went on a rare cruise. Away slid the shallow ship, "more swift than swallows skim the liquid sky;" but the behaviour of the merry mariner on the voyage was, I regret to say, most improper. She possessed a whole storehouse of droll anecdotes, and while she told them she laughed till the tears rolled down her pretty naughty face. It is certain that she "chaffed" Sir Cymochles, and I am very much afraid that she tickled him; but he was rather pleased than otherwise with "her light behaviour and loose dalliance." Her name, she said, was Phædria. The inland sea, from which the river ran, and on whose bosom the gondelay was floating, was named, she remarked, the Idle Lake.

How the pair came at last to an island waste and void that floated in the midst of that great lake; how the laughing lady conducted the bemused knight to a chosen plot of fertile land, "amongst wide oases set, like a little nest;" how in that painted oasis there was "no tree whose branches did not bravely spring, no branch on which a fine bird did not sit;" how she fed his eyes and senses with false delights; how she led him to a shady vale, and laid him down on a grassy plain; how he—oh! idiotic knight—

took off his helmet, and laid his disarmed head in her lap; how she, as he sank into slumber, lulled him with a wondrously beautiful love lay, in which she sang of "the lily, lady of the flow'ring field," and of "the fleur de lys, her lovely paramour;" how, subsequently, steeping with strong narcotics the eyelids of that bamboozled knight, she left him snoring, and hied her to her gondelay again; and how eventually she, plying at the Wapping Old Stairs of Faëry, like a jolly, wicked young water-woman as she was, picked up Sir Guyon, and him inveigled to the Idle Island in that Idle Lake; and how there was a terrific broadsword combat of two about that "ladye debonnaire"—are not all these things written in the chronicle of the land which never was—in the *Faërie Queene* of Edmund Spenser? If you be wise, you will take the marvellous poem with you as your only travelling companion the next time you journey to the Idle Lake.

I am not habitually idle. I cannot afford it. Highly as I appreciate the delight of doing nothing, of lying in bed and being fed with a spoon, or of eating peaches from the wall with my hands in my pockets, like Thomson, I am yet constrained, as a rule, to work for a certain number of hours in the course of every day or night, in order to obtain a certain quantity of household bread. I have been wandering these many years past in a wilderness of work, not unrelieved, however, by occasional oases. I remember them all, and dwell on the remembrance of them with infinite delight; even as that stolid wretch in hodden grey, tramping the treadmill's intolerable stairs, may dwell upon that soft and happy Sybarite time he passed after he was so lucky as to find the gentleman's gold watch and chain in the gentleman's pocket, and before he was "wanted" by the myrmidons of a justice which would take no denial, and stigmatised his treasure trove as plunder, and his lucky find as an act of larceny. A jovial time he had: all tripe and dominoes, and shag tobacco and warm ale. It was an oasis in his desert life of walking about in search of something to steal; and although there are poets and philosophers who maintain that the memory of happier days is a sorrow's crown of sorrow, I have always been of a contrary opinion; holding that, as hope springs eternal in the human breast, a man is seldom so miserable but that, if he has been already happy, he cherishes the aspiration of being happy again. He may be conjuring up visions of future tripe and warm ale, more

succulent and more stimulating than ever: that tramping man in hodden grey.

I am mindful of an oasis in Hampshire, and of one in Surrey; of a lotus-garden (where I overeat myself once) in an island in the Adriatic, and of a Valley of Poppies in North Africa. I know a bank in Andalusia on which I have reclined, pleasantly yawning, and drawing idle diagrams with my walking-stick in the sands of time at my feet. I know a cascade, far, far up in the mountains of Mexico, among the silver mines, the silvery plashing of whose down-come rings in the ear of my soul now, drowning the actual and prosaic lapping of the water "coming in" at Number Nine, next door. I am braced up tight between the shafts, blinkers block my eyes, and a cruel bit chafes my mouth, while those tearing wheels behind me seem pressing on my heels, and ever and anon the smacking whip of the driver scathes my sides; but do you think I forget the paddock in which I kicked up my heels, or resting my nose on the top of the fence, calmly contemplated the hacks on the highway, bridled and bitted, pursued by wheels, and quivering under the whipcord? Do you think that I forget the Idle Lake?

I had been to the wars when I came upon it. It was an ugly war in which I was concerned, a desultory, unsatisfactory, semi-guerilla warfare, in the Italian Tyrol. Our commander was a famous Hero, but his troops were, to use the American expression, "a little mixed," and I am afraid that in several of the encounters in which we were engaged we ran away. We got scarcely anything to eat, and we slept more frequently in the open air than under a roof. It was a campaign performed by snatches, and interspersed with armistices; and now and again I used to come down out of the mountains, ragged, dirty, hungry, demoralised, and "exceeding fierce," and journey to Milan for letters, money, and clean linen, to have a warm bath, and enjoy a little civilisation. I am afraid that the guests at the Hotel Cavour, in the capital of Lombardy, formed anything but a favourable opinion of my manners; still, if I did nearly swallow my spoon as well as my soup, and occasionally seize a mutton cutlet by the shank, and gnaw it wolfishly, where was the harm? It was so long since I had had a decent dinner; nor did I know, when I got back to the mountains, when I might get another.

It was on one of these expeditions to Milan that Eugenius Mildman and I struck up a friendship. He was as mild

as his name; a beaming, pious, gushing, amiable creature, as innocent as a lamb, as brave as a lion—I marked his conduct once in a battle, from which, with the prudence of a non-combatant camp-follower, I timeously retreated—and as affectionate as a young gazelle. I wish they would keep such exemplary Englishmen as Mildman's race in England; but the good fellows have a strange fancy for wasting their sweetness on the desert air of foreign countries; they do good at Florence, and blush to find it fame at Malaga; they act the part of the Man of Ross in Norway, and their right hand knoweth not what their left hand doeth at Smyrna; they enrich Thebes and beautify Tadmor in the wilderness; and, with deplorable frequency, and in the prime of life, they die of low fever at Damascus. Mildman was just the kind of charitable soul to die at Damascus, universally regretted, yet with a life wasted, somehow, in good deeds, done at the wrong time, in the wrong place, for the benefit of the wrong kind of people. He was beautifully purposeless when I met him; was undecided as to whether he should publish a series of translations from the Sarmatian anthology, in aid of the Polish emigration, or raise a loan in furtherance of public (denominational) education in the republic of Guatimozin. Meanwhile he had been fighting a little with Garibaldi. I need scarcely add that he was a spiritualist and a homœopathist, and that he occasionally spoke, not in the strongest terms of censure, of the community of Oneida Creek, the Agapemone, the followers of Johanna Southcote, and the Unknown Tongues. It was a toss up, I used to warn Mildman, between La Trappe and Colney Hatch for him. "Do something practical," I used to say to Mildman. "Pay a premium to a stock-broker, and spend a year in his office. Enlist yourself to a sharp solicitor. Enlist in the Sappers and Miners. You have plenty of money. Take chambers in St. James's, and discount bills at sixty per cent. Make a voyage to Pernambuco before the mast. Go in for the realities." But he wouldn't; and I am afraid that he will die at Damascus, universally regretted, and that his courier will run away with his dressing-case and his circular notes.

I shall be ever grateful to Eugenius Mildman, for he made me acquainted with the Idle Lake. It was during one of my expeditions to Milan, and broiling summer weather. The Scala was closed; and at the Canobbiana (the operatic succursal to the grander theatre) the tenor had a wooden

leg, the "prima donna assoluta" was fifty-three years of age, and the "prima ballerina" was slightly humped in the back, and was endowed with but a single eye; so, as you may imagine, the Canobbiana entertainments did not draw very crowded audiences. The garden of the usually pleasant Caffé Cova, where we dined (chiefly on macaroni and fried intestines), "al fresco," had become a nuisance, owing to the continual presence of noisy patriots, smoking bad "Cavours," and screeching about the incapacity of General de la Marmora, and the shameful tergiversation of the Emperor Napoleon the Third in the matter of the Dominio Veneto. The caricatures in the Spirito Folletto were woefully stupid, and altogether Milan had become socially uninhabitable. Mildman and I determined to start on a ramble. We got to Chiavenna, and so, by Vico Soprano, to St. Moritz. Thence, hiring a little "calescino," a picturesque kind of one-horse chaise, we made Samaden, and for three weeks or so dodged in and out of the minor Alpine passes—the Bernina, the Tonale, and so forth—taking to mule-back when the roads were impracticable for the "calescino," and coming out into the Tyrol at last somewhere near Storo, where we rejoined our famous Hero and his red-shirted army. After another skirmish or so—we called them battles—there was another armistice, and back I came to Milan, but this time alone. I shook hands with Mildman, and the last I saw of him was his slender figure bestriding a mule in a mountain gorge, and in the setting sun. He was departing in quest of windmills to charge, or forlorn Dulcineas to rescue; he was bound for Damascus, or the "ewigkeit." What do I know about it? Farewell, excellent Quixotic man.

But I went back to Mediolanum; and for the next eight weeks I was continually running backwards and forwards to the Idle Lake. I had grown to love it. I loved even the quaint old Lombard town from which the lake derives, not its sobriquet, but its real name. There are two of the dirtiest and dearest hotels in Northern Italy in that town; yet I was fond of them both. There are as many evil smells in the town as in Cologne; yet the imperfect drainage, and the too apparent presence of decaying animal and vegetable matter in the market-place, did not affect me. Was I not on the shore of the great, calm, blue lake, with the blue sky above, and the blue mountains in the distance, and the whole glorious landscape shot with threads of gold by the much embroidering sun? I

had made the acquaintance of a Milanese banker who had a charming villa on the opposite side of the lake, say at Silva Selvaggia. He had a pretty yacht, in which many a time we made voyages on the idle expanse, voyages which reminded me of the cruise of Sir Cymochles. My host was an enthusiastic fresh-water sailor, so much so that the lake boatman used to call him, "Il Signore della Vela." He was perpetually splicing his mainbrace, and reefing his topsail. Sail! we did nothing but sail: that is to say when we were not breakfasting, or dining, or smoking, or drinking "asti spumante," or dozing, or playing with a large French poodle that was rated on the books of the yacht, and I think did more work than any of the crew (one man, very like Fra Diavolo in a check shirt, and without shoes and stockings, and a boy who played the guitar), for he was incessantly racing from the bow to the stern, and barking at the passing boats. We spent at least eight hours out of the twenty-four on the water; and when there was a dead calm we lay to and went to sleep. At breakfast time the Perseveranza, the chief journal of Lombardy, came to hand, and our hostess would read out the telegrams for our edification. After that we bade the Perseveranza go hang, and strolled down towards the yacht. I never read anything, I never wrote anything, I never thought of anything, while I was floating on the Idle Lake, save of what a capital thing it would be to be idle for ever.

In our boating excursions we frequently landed at different points on the lake, and called upon people. They were always glad to see us, and to entertain us with fruit, wine, cigars, sonatas on the pianoforte (if there were ladies present), and perfectly idle conversation. I never yet learnt the "nice conduct of a clouded cane;" but I think that I acquired, during my sojourn on the Idle Lake, the art of twirling a fan, and of cutting paper. Had I stayed long enough I might have learned to whistle: that grand accomplishment of the perfect idler. By degrees I became conscious that my visiting acquaintance was extending among a very remarkable set of people; and that nearly everybody occupying the dainty palazzi and trim little villas nestling among the vines, and oranges, and olives of the Idle Lake was Somebody. It will be no violation of confidence I hope, and no ungrateful requital of hospitality, to hint that at Bella Riviera to the north-east was situated the charming country house of Madame la Princesse

Hatzoff, the consort, indeed, of the well-known General Adjutant and Grand Chamberlain to His Imperial Majesty the Tsar of all the Russias. M. le Prince resides on his extensive estates in the government of Tamboff. Some say that he is sojourning in a yet remoter government, that of Tobolsk in Siberia, where he is occupied in mining pursuits in the way of rolling quartz stone in the wheelbarrow to which he, as a life convict, is chained. The Princess Hatzoff passes her winters either in Paris or Florence, her springs in England, her autumns at Homburg or Baden, and her summers on the Idle Lake. She is enormously rich, although M. le Prince, during their brief wedded life, did his best to squander the splendid fortune she brought him. She is growing old now; her clustering ringlets—she was renowned for her ringlets—are silvery white; her shoulders are arched, and her hands tremble ominously as she holds her cards at piquet; but her complexion is still exquisitely clear, and she is not indebted to art for the roses on her cheeks. Her feet are deliciously small and shapely, and she is fond of exhibiting them, in their open-worked silk stockings, and their coquettish little slippers with the high heels and the pink rosettes. Forty years ago you used to see waxen models, coloured to the life, of those feet (with the adjoining ankles), ay, and of those half-paralysed hands, in the shops of the Palais Royal and Regent-street, and the Great Moskaiia at Petersburg. Forty years ago her portraits, in half a hundred costumes and a whole hundred attitudes, were to be found in every printseller's window in Europe. Forty years ago she was not Madame la Princesse Hatzoff, but Mademoiselle Marie Fragioli, the most famous opera-dancer of her age. The world has quite forgotten her, but I doubt whether she has as completely forgotten the world: nay, I fancy that in her sumptuous retreat she sometimes rages, and is wretched at the thought that age, decrepitude, and her exalted rank compel her to wear long clothes, and that in the airiest of draperies she can no longer spring forward to the footlights, night after night, to be deafened by applause, and pelted with bouquets, and to find afterwards at the stage-door more bouquets, with diamond bracelets for holders, and reams of billet-doux on pink note-paper. Those triumphs, for her, are all over. They are enjoyed by sylphs as fair, as nimble, and as caressed as she has been; and when she reads of their successes in the newspapers

a bitter sickness comes across her. What artificer likes to reflect upon his loss of competency in his art? Are retired ambassadors, are generals hopelessly on half-pay, are superannuated statesmen, or the head-masters of public schools, who have retired on handsome pensions, so very happy, think you? Not so, perchance. Ambition survives capacity very often. The diplomatist clings to his despatch-bag, the soldier to his bâton of command, the minister to his red box, the pedant to his rod, the actor to his sock and buskin or his comic mask, long after the verdict of superfluity has been delivered; long after the dread fiat of inefficiency has gone forth—the fiat proclaiming that the bellows are burned, that the lead is consumed of the fire, and that the founder worketh in vain.

All round the coasts of the Idle Lake there were retired celebrities. The district was a kind of prosperous Patmos, a St. Helena tenanted by voluntary exiles, a jovial Cave of Adullam. Here vegetated an enriched director of promenade concerts; there enjoyed his sumptuous "otium" the ex-proprietor of dwarfs and giants, of learned pigs and industrious fleas; and in yonder Swiss chalet lived a lion-tamer, much famed on the Idle Lake for his proficiency in breeding rabbits. Millionaire patentees of cough lozenges, bronchitic wafers, anti-asthmatic cigarettes, universal pills, and Good Samaritan ointments, abounded on the Lake; together with a group of wealthy veteran tenors, baritones, and bassi, several Parisian restaurateurs and café keepers who had realised large fortunes; a contractor of one of the Rhine watering-place gambling tables; many affluent linendrapers and court milliners, and an English ex-butcher from Bond-street, as rich as Croesus. All who were out of debt, and had nothing to grumble at, seemed to have gathered themselves together on these shores, leading a tranquil, dozy, dawdling kind of existence, so that you might have imagined them to be partakers before their time of the delights of some Eastern Elysium, and to be absorbed in the perpetual contemplation of Buddha.

But my days of relaxation on the banks of the Idle Lake came, with that autumn, to an end; and away I went into the "ewigkeit," always into the "ewigkeit," to be tossed about in more wars and rumours of wars, and rebellions and revolutions. For years I have not set eyes upon the Idle Lake; but I often dream of it, and puzzle myself to determine whether it is situated somewhere between the Lake of

Garda and the Lake of Como. But that there is such a Lake, and that it is gloriously Idle, I am very certain.

STAGE BANQUETS.

A VETERAN actor of inferior fame once expressed his extreme dislike to what he was pleased to term "the sham wine parties" of Macbeth and others. He was weary of the Barmecide banquets of the stage, of affecting to quaff with gusto imaginary wine out of empty pasteboard goblets, and of making believe to have an appetite for wooden apples and "property" comestibles. He was in every sense a poor player, and had often been a very hungry one. He took especial pleasure in remembering the entertainments of the theatre in which the necessities of performance, or regard for rooted tradition, involved the setting of real edible food before the actors. At the same time he greatly lamented the limited number of dramas in which these precious opportunities occurred.

He had grateful memories of the rather obsolete Scottish melodrama of Cramond Brig; for in this work old custom demanded the introduction of a real sheep's head with accompanying "trotters." He told of a North British manager who was wont—especially when the salaries he was supposed to pay were somewhat in arrear, and he desired to keep his company in good humour and, may be, alive—to produce this play on Saturday nights. For some days before the performance the dainties that were destined to grace it underwent exhibition in the green-room. A label bore the inscription: "This sheep's head will appear in the play of Cramond Brig on next Saturday night. God save the King." "It afforded us all two famous dinners," reveals our veteran. "We had a large pot of broth made with the head and feet; these we ate on Saturday night; the broth we had on Sunday." So in another Scottish play, the Gentle Shepherd of Allan Ramsay, it was long the custom on stages north of the Tweed to present a real haggis, although niggard managers were often tempted to substitute for the genuine dish a far less savoury if more wholesome mess of oatmeal. But a play more famous still for the reality of its victuals, and better known to modern times, was Prince Hoare's musical farce, No Song, no Supper. A steaming hot boiled leg of lamb and turnips may be described as quite the leading character in this entertainment. Without

this appetising addition the play has never been represented. There is a story, however, which one can only hope is incorrect, of an impresario of Oriental origin, who supplying the necessary meal, yet subsequently fined his company all round on the ground that they had "combined to destroy certain of the properties of the theatre."

There are many other plays in the course of which genuine food is consumed on the stage. But some excuse for the generally fictitious nature of theatrical repasts is to be found in the fact that eating, during performance, is often a very difficult matter for the actors to accomplish. Michael Kelly in his Memoirs relates that he was required to eat part of a fowl in the supper scene of a bygone operatic play called A House to be Sold. Bannister at rehearsal had informed him that it was very difficult to swallow food on the stage. Kelly was incredulous, however. "But strange as it may appear," he writes, "I found it a fact that I could not get down a morsel. My embarrassment was a great source of fun to Bannister and Suett, who were both gifted with the accommodating talent of stage feeding. Whoever saw poor Suett as the lawyer in No Song no Supper, tucking in his boiled leg of lamb, or in the Siege of Belgrade, will be little disposed to question my testimony to the fact." From this account, however, it is manifest that the difficulty of "stage feeding," as Kelly calls it, is not invariably felt by all actors alike. And probably, although the appetites of the superior players may often fail them, the supernumerary or the representative of minor characters could generally contrive to make a respectable meal if the circumstances of the case supplied the opportunity.

The difficulty that attends eating on the stage does not, it would seem, extend to drinking, and sometimes the introduction of real and potent liquors during the performance has led to unfortunate results. Thus Whincop, who, in 1747, published a tragedy called Scanderbeg, adding to it "a List of all the Dramatic Authors, with some Account of their Lives," &c., describes a curious occurrence at the Theatre Royal in 1693. A comedy entitled The Wary Widow, or Sir Noisy Parrot, written by one Higden, and now a very scarce book, had been produced; but on the first representation, "the author had contrived so much drinking of punch in the play that the actors almost all got drunk, and were unable to get through with it, so that

the audience was dismissed at the end of the third act." Upon subsequent performances of the comedy no doubt the management reduced the strength of the punch, or substituted some harmless beverage, toast-and-water perhaps, imitative of that ardent compound so far as mere colour was concerned. There have been actors, however, who have refused to accept the innocent semblance of vinous liquor supplied by the management, and especially when, as part of their performance, they were required to simulate intoxication. A certain representative of Cassio was wont to take to the theatre a bottle of claret from his own cellar, whenever he was called upon to sustain that character. It took possession of him too thoroughly, he said, with a plausible air, to allow of his affecting inebriety after holding an empty goblet to his lips, or swallowing mere toast-and-water or small beer. Still his precaution had its disadvantages. The real claret he consumed might make his intemperance somewhat too genuine and accurate; and his portrayal of Cassio's speedy return to sobriety might be in such wise very difficult of accomplishment. So there have been players of dainty taste, who, required to eat in the presence of the audience, have elected to bring their own provisions, from some suspicion of the quality of the food provided by the management. We have heard of a clown who, entering the theatre nightly to undertake the duties of his part, was observed to carry with him always a neat little paper parcel. What did it contain? bystanders inquired of each other. Well, in the comic scenes of pantomime it is not unusual to see a very small child, dressed perhaps as a charity-boy, crossing the stage, bearing in his hands a slice of bread-and-butter. The clown steals this article of food and devours it; whereupon the child, crying aloud, pursues him hither and thither about the stage. The incident always excites much amusement; for in pantomimes the world is turned upside-down, and moral principles have no existence; cruelty is only comical, and outrageous crime the best of jokes. The paper parcel borne to the theatre by the clown under mention enclosed the bread-and-butter that was to figure in the harlequinade. "You see I'm a particular feeder," the performer explained. "I can't eat bread-and-butter of *any one's* cutting. Besides, I've tried it, and they only afford salt butter. I can't stand that. So as I've got to eat it and no mistake, with all the house looking at me,

I cut a slice when I'm having my own tea, at home, and bring it down with me."

Rather among the refreshments of the side-wings than of the stage must be counted that reeking tumbler of "very brown, very hot, and very strong brandy-and-water," which, as Doctor Doran relates, was prepared for poor Edmund Kean, as, towards the close of his career, he was wont to stagger from before the footlights, and, overcome by his exertions and infirmities, to sink, "a helpless, speechless, fainting, bent-up mass," into the chair placed in readiness to receive the shattered, ruined actor. With Kean's prototype in acting and in excess, George Frederick Cooke, it was less a question of stage or side-wing refreshments than of the measure of preliminary potation he had indulged in. In what state would he come down to the theatre? Upon the answer to that inquiry the entertainments of the night greatly depended. "I was drunk the night before last," Cooke said on one occasion; "still I acted, and they hissed me. Last night I was drunk again, and I didn't act, they hissed all the same. There's no knowing how to please the public." A fine actor, Cooke was also a genuine humorist, and it must be said for him, although a like excuse has been perhaps too often pleaded for such failings as his, that his senses gave way, and his brain became affected after very slight indulgence. From this, however, he could not be persuaded to abstain, and so made havoc of his genius, and terminated, prematurely and ignobly enough, his professional career.

Many stories are extant as to performances being interrupted by the entry of innocent messengers bringing to the players, in the presence of the audience, refreshments they had designed to consume behind the scenes, or sheltered from observation between the wings. Thus it is told of one Walls, who was the prompter in a Scottish theatre, and occasionally appeared in minor parts, that he once directed a maid-of-all-work, employed in the wardrobe department of the theatre, to bring him a gill of whisky. The night was wet, so the girl, not caring to go out, intrusted the commission to a little boy who happened to be standing by. The play was Othello, and Walls played the Duke. The scene of the senate was in course of representation. Brabantio had just stated:

My particular grief
Is of so flood-gate and o'erbearing nature,
That it engulfs and swallows other sorrows,
And it is still itself,

and the Duke, obedient to his cue, had inquired :

Why, what's the matter ?

when the little boy appeared upon the stage, bearing a pewter measure, and explained, "It's just the whisky, Mr. Walls; and I could na git ony at fourpence, so yer awn the landlord a penny; and he says it's time you was payin' what's doon i' the book." The senate broke up amidst the uproarious laughter of the audience.

Real macaroni in Masaniello, and real champagne in Don Giovanni, in order that Leporello may have opportunities for "comic business" in the supper scene, are demanded by the customs of the operatic stage. Realism generally, indeed, is greatly affected in the modern theatre. The audiences of to-day require not merely that real water shall be seen to flow from a pump, or to form a cataract, but that real wine shall proceed from real bottles, and be fairly swallowed by the performers. In Paris, a complaint was recently made that, in a scene representing an entertainment in modern fashionable society, the champagne supplied was only of a second-rate quality. Through powerful opera-glasses the bottle labels could be read, and the management's sacrifice of truthfulness to economy was severely criticised. The audience resented the introduction of the cheaper liquor, as though they had themselves been constrained to drink it.

As part also of the modern regard for realism may be noted the "cooking-scenes," which have frequently figured in recent plays. The old conjuring trick of making a pudding in a hat never won more admiration than is now obtained by such simple expedients as frying bacon or sausages, or broiling chops or steaks upon the stage in sight of the audience. The manufacture of paste for puddings or pies by one of the dramatis personæ has also been very favourably received, and the first glimpse of the real rolling-pin and the real flour to be thus employed, has always been attended with applause. In a late production, the opening of a soda-water bottle by one of the characters was generally regarded as quite the most impressive effect of the representation.

At Christmas time, when the shops are so copiously supplied with articles of food as to suggest a notion that the world is content to live upon half-rations at other seasons of the year, there is extraordinary storing of provisions at certain of the theatres. These are not edible, however; they are due to the art of the property-

maker, and are designed for what are known as the "spill and pelt" scenes of the pantomime. They represent juicy legs of mutton, brightly streaked with red and white, quartered loaves, trussed fowls, turnips, carrots, and cabbages, strings of sausages, fish of all kinds, sizes, and colours; they are to be stolen and pocketed by the clown, recaptured by the policeman, and afterwards wildly whirled in all directions in a general "rally" of all the characters in the harlequinade. They are but adroitly painted canvas stuffed with straw or sawdust. No doubt the property-maker sometimes views from the wings with considerable dismay the severe usage to which his works of art are subjected. "He's an excellent clown, sir," one such was once heard to say, regarding from his own stand-point the performance of the jester in question. "He don't destroy the properties as some do." Perhaps now and then, too, a minor actor or a supernumerary, who has derided "the sham wine parties of Macbeth and others," may lament the scandalous waste of seeming good victuals in a pantomime. But, as a rule, these performers are not fanciful on this, or, indeed, on any other subject. They are not to be deceived by the illusions of the stage; they are themselves too much a part of its shams and artifices. Property legs of mutton are to them not even food for reflection, but simply "properties," and nothing more. Otherwise, a somewhat too cynical disposition might be unfortunately encouraged; and the poor player, whose part requires him to be lavish of bank-notes of enormous amount upon the stage, and the hungry "super," constrained to maltreat articles of food which he would prize dearly if they were but real, might be too bitterly affected by noting the grievous discrepancy existing between their private and their public careers—the men they are and the characters they seem to be.

CASTAWAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP," "WRECKED IN PORT," &c. &c.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER VIII. COMBINATION AND CONSPIRACY.

MRS. ENTWISTLE lying on her sofa, which—there being no longer anything worth looking out at—had been moved away from the window and wheeled opposite the fire, was gazing into the glowing coals, and seeing in them dreary scenes, which harmonised with the gloomy state of her mental reflection, for Mrs. Entwistle was

in a very low condition of mind and body. Her maid Willis, whose life was rendered a burden to her by the perpetual and always contradictory orders which she was receiving from the invalid, could have vouched for this; and so could Doctor Asprey, who was in such constant request, and had his valuable time so much intruded upon by his eccentric patient, that he was compelled to speak out frankly, and to come to an understanding with her.

"Your guineas, my dear Mrs. Entwistle," said the great physician, blandly, "are as good to me as any one else's, and if I thought I earned them honestly I should not have the smallest scruple in taking them. Further, I am bound to say that were I, as I was some years ago, a struggling man, to whom fees are an object, my scruples would trouble me infinitely less than they do now. But the fact is, there is a large number of persons anxious for my advice, to whom I can be of real service, while to you I can do no possible good. Your bodily health is certainly no worse than it was previous to your last attack, no worse, that is to say, in itself. If you suffer yourself to be preyed upon by any mental disquietude, you at once put yourself out of the range of my art. I cannot minister to a mind diseased, my dear Mrs. Entwistle, nor should I presume to suggest to you where you would most probably receive the necessary consolation."

"Thanks, doctor, for your reticence," said Mrs. Entwistle, with a faint smile. "A man of less *savoir faire* would certainly have recommended me to apply to the incumbent of the parish. However, my mental disquietude, as you term it, is not of any great moment, and I will take care not to pester you causelessly any more."

Indeciding that the trouble which preyed upon her mind was of no great moment, Mrs. Entwistle scarcely spoke the truth. Ever since she had revealed to Gerald the history of her early days, and of the manner in which, for the sake of gratifying her own longings for vengeance, she had practised upon his father's jealousy, the aspect of life had changed to her. Other persons would have found such a life passed on an invalid's sofa, whence, as she knew well, she would never be carried but to her grave, sufficiently blank and colourless. But from the day on which Gerald Hardinge first took up his abode with her, to that on which she saw the tear steal down his face, as he listened to the story of his mother's wrongs, the woman, whom all the

world looked upon with pity, and half her little world regarded with contempt, had enjoyed a wealth of quiet happiness, such as was granted but to few of her friends.

From the day she told her story, Gerald's manner had altered towards her. He was not less affectionate; on the contrary, whenever he was with her she could see that he strove to pay her constant attention, and to be specially loving, both in language and manner, whenever he addressed her. But the young man was changed, changed in every way, and, as Mrs. Entwistle thought, very much for the worse. The society into which she had introduced him, and in which he had taken such delight, had no longer any charm for him. Formerly his absences from home were comparatively rare, and on his return he would generally bring with him some anecdote of the company in which his time had been passed; now he was away constantly from morning till night, and, as regarded most of his actions, was silent as the grave.

There was one subject, however, on which Gerald had spoken to his aunt, and spoken frankly. That girl, whose acquaintance he had made when he was amongst those theatrical people, and whom he had met in London on her way to some low employment which she had—he had spoken about her. When he first mentioned his accident of encountering with Rose in the street, narrating at the same time how he had known her as a child, and given her drawing-lessons at Wexeter, Mrs. Entwistle gave no hint of objection to his renewal of the acquaintance, but, on the contrary, expressed a wish that Rose should be brought to call upon her, and patronised her, as we have seen. After she had received a visit from the young girl, and noticed her rare and delicate beauty, her simple self-possession, and the general air of refinement and high breeding which characterised her, more especially after she had marked the effect which these charms had unmistakably produced upon Gerald, it occurred to Mrs. Entwistle that certain relations might eventually arise between the young people, of which she would be supposed to be in ignorance, but which would necessarily prevent her from receiving Miss Pierrepont in her house. Mrs. Entwistle was a woman of the world, and of that world which now-a-days is not reticent in its remarks about matters which our ancestors discreetly ignored; so she took an opportunity of mentioning what

she had in her mind to Gerald, and received a reply which, both in words and meaning, was stronger and sterner than anything which she had yet heard from his lips. Mrs. Entwistle shrugged her shoulders; her nephew was a purist, she supposed, and the young men of the present day, if he were to be taken as an example, were notably different from those of her time. His friendship with this young girl was, she supposed, one of those queer fancies which were part and parcel of his artistic nature. It never occurred to her for one moment that George Heriot, no longer an outcast, but, though not yet restored to his position and his name, yet well placed before the world as her adopted heir, could ever intend to offer marriage to Rose Pierrepont, an unknown person, who earned her living by her own labour, and when Gerald announced to her that he had proposed, and been accepted by this same "young person," and was only awaiting the result of his interview with his father to carry the project into execution, Mrs. Entwistle was furious. It is probable that in her rage she might have ordered her nephew to quit the house, had not Gerald in the same speech announced to her, with all expressions of gratitude for her past kindness, his intention of being solely self-reliant for the future, and of seeking his fortune in a foreign country. Then her love for the boy, which had been growing up for the last few years, increasing year by year as his manhood developed, asserted itself with fullest force, and in the bitterness of her despair at the idea of parting from him, the proud woman humbled herself to pour forth a plaint which no one could have listened to unmoved. Why should his marriage, which ought to be a joy to them both, prove a source of sorrow to her? What necessity was there for him to go away? Could he not bring his wife to that house, which for years he had looked upon as his home, where she should be received as a daughter, and of which she should be made the mistress? Ah, would he not wait by her a very, very little time longer, until—until—and then her voice broke, and Gerald, profoundly touched, whispered that her wishes should be obeyed.

But when this excited emotion, which lasted for a very short period with Mrs. Entwistle, had passed away, she found herself not one whit more inclined to approve of what she held to be her nephew's intention of mésalliance, not one atom

better disposed towards the person of his choice. She felt herself in duty bound to request Gerald to bring Rose constantly to her house, by which means she herself saw far more of her nephew than she otherwise would have done. For the love-making between Gerald and Rose at this period of their career was by no means so offensive as such proceedings are generally supposed to be; and their meetings were usually held in Mrs. Entwistle's boudoir, where they sat by the side of the invalid's sofa. Mrs. Entwistle had bitterly opposed Gerald's plan for going down to Spring-side, and acquainting his father with the details of the story which she had told him, not merely because it would incense Sir Geoffry against her and place her character in a most disadvantageous light—as for that she cared nothing—but the result of the interview, whatever it might be, might have the effect of hastening Gerald's marriage. For if Sir Geoffry, believing what was told him, and repenting of his former rigorous conduct, clasped his son to his heart and reinstated him in his position, he would be too glad in the excess of his joy to agree to anything his son wished, and to accept as daughter-in-law no matter who might be proposed. While, on the other hand, should the attempt at reconciliation prove a failure, there was the chance that Gerald in his fury would instantly ally Rose's fate with his own, and forgetful of the promise which he had made to remain with his aunt until her death, would start off with his wife to seek their fortune in a new land. And although her fears had not been verified, Mrs. Entwistle was still not without alarm. She had seen how much Gerald had taken to heart the rebuff and the insult he had received. She had noticed—she could not help noticing and grieving over—the change in his appearance and manner, the loss of the fire and energy which formerly characterised his every thought and movement, the dull, moody, brooding state into which he had fallen, and from which even Rose's companionship sometimes failed to rouse him. He had told her—for in all his communications with her Gerald was consistently frank—that his one great aim in life was to be reconciled to his father, that he had told Rose as much, and that she had given him fresh hope. It appeared that Rose—how, or through whom, she would not say—had the means of bringing certain influence to bear upon Sir Geoffry Heriot, and this influence was to be strongly exercised in Gerald's favour.

Mrs. Entwistle, being really in her heart extremely doubtful of the existence of any such power as that described by her nephew, at first endeavoured to inveigle Rose into a discussion in which a judicious series of cross-questioning might either have exposed the pretence, or elicited from her the source and means of her influence with Sir Geoffry. Finding this to be a total failure, and utterly discomfited by the quiet manner in which the girl parried all her attacks, Mrs. Entwistle was reduced to uttering small scraps of sarcastic doubt, and even of these she was compelled to be chary in her nephew's presence.

See her now, stretched out on the sofa, her head thrown back, her thin hand, still clasping the light fire-screen, fallen passively by her side. Doctor Asprey may be right; that dull, dead, white complexion, those hollow cheeks, those puckered lips, may belong to what has become her normal state, but it is a grewsome aspect nevertheless, and one suggestive of dire illness, if not of immediately impending dissolution, to the uninitiated beholder.

A light firm step in the passage outside, and hearing it the invalid at once changes her attitude, manages by an effort to prop herself into a less recumbent position, and takes up a book which she had let fall by her side on the sofa. A vain pretence this, as she recognises immediately by putting it back again, the dusk having supervened since she fell into her reverie, and there being no longer daylight sufficient to read by. Onward comes the footstep, and her brow grows more stern. Her eyes are closed when the door opens, remain closed until the incoming figure, Rose Pierrepont, dressed in a neat hat and veil, with a long dark cloak, is standing beside her.

Then she opens them wearily, says wearily, "It is you—Rose?" with a marked hesitation before the utterance of the christian name.

"It is I, Mrs. Entwistle! I feared to disturb you, as I thought you were asleep."

"No, I read until I could see no longer, and then I closed my eyes, principally, I fancy, to keep myself from glaring into the fire and seeing uncomfortable visions there. You have brought Gerald with you?"

"No, I thought to find him here."

"Have you any news for him?" asked the invalid, suddenly turning her face towards her companion.

"None at all," said the young girl, shaking her head sadly.

"Then your mysterious influence, the

secret of which you guard so jealously, has not yet been able to prevail upon Sir Geoffry to grant his son that interview upon which Gerald counts so much?"

"No, it has not."

"It," repeated Mrs. Entwistle, with a sarcastic inflection of her voice. "Your prudence, especially for so young a person, is quite wonderful. By saying 'it,' you commit neither yourself nor any one else. If any other man than Geoffry Heriot had been in question, I would have wagered you had said 'she.'"

"I am forbidden to state the means by which I am in hopes of winning Sir Geoffry to our side, and as you are aware, Mrs. Entwistle, Gerald, who is equally ignorant as everybody else about them, absolves me from telling him.

"I am aware of that, Rose," said Mrs. Entwistle, with a repetition of her former hesitation, "and I am sure I do not desire to press you upon the subject. It will be sufficient for us to know the name of our benefactor when—well, when we have derived any benefit from it."

At this juncture Gerald entered the room, and after bending over his aunt's sofa, and greeting Rose, he threw himself into a chair, and sat with his hands plunged into his pockets, silent and moody, waiting to be spoken to, so unlike the Gerald Hardinge of a few months previous.

"It is useless to ask you whether you have any news, Gerald, I suppose?" said Mrs. Entwistle.

"None at all," he replied. "No news now would have any interest to me, unless it came through Rose here, and I know she has none, or she would have rushed at me with it directly she came in."

"You judge rightly, Gerald," said Rose. "I have heard nothing—nothing at all."

"Our dear Rose's oracle takes a long time for deliberation," said Mrs. Entwistle, clipping out the words between her lips. "Let us trust that when it is induced to speak its utterances may be favourable."

"Whether it speaks or not, matters very little to me now," said Gerald. "Not, dear one," he added, extending his hand to Rose, "that I mean to be in the least degree unkind to you. I know all that you have done has been for the best, and in the belief that you would be able to carry out all you hoped. But I find I cannot exist under this mental pressure any longer, and I fear, unless some result, no matter whether favourable or unfavourable, be speedily arrived at, my mind will give way.

There is no torture, to me, at least, to equal this agony of suspense."

"What do you propose to do, then?" asked Mrs. Entwistle, anxiously.

"To make one more effort to see my father, and set myself right with him. If I succeed, my one aim in life will be accomplished; if I fail, I shall be able to settle myself down with the conviction that I, as a mortal, had done my best, and that the fates were against me."

"Will you not let me try once more to see whether I cannot help you?" said Rose; "I am sure that——"

"I am sure that you have done all you can, my dear child, and that any further attempt would be useless. Indeed, I would rather come upon my father, taking him as unprepared even as I did last time, than that he should imagine I was currying favour with his friends to influence him in my behalf."

"If you would take the advice of one who has seen much more of the world than you, and who knows the tempers of men in general, and of Geoffry Heriot in particular," said Mrs. Entwistle, "you will think twice before you act on that determination. So far as you are aware, nothing has transpired since your previous visit to your father to warrant you in anticipating any better reception than you then experienced. We, who are devoted to you, Rose and I, can judge of the effect which that former visit had upon you. You cannot yourself pretend to be ignorant of, you cannot pretend to deny, that since then you are a completely changed man, and you owe it as much to us as well as to yourself, to think over and weigh well what might be the result of a repetition of such insults."

While she was speaking these words, Mrs. Entwistle managed to raise herself upon her elbow, and emphasised her speech with telling gesture. Her cheeks were flushed, and her voice rang out in tones such as Gerald had never heard it utter. When, as she ceased speaking, she fell back faint with the exertion, Gerald rose from his chair, and quickly crossing the room, caught her in his arms and pressed his lips upon her forehead.

"I should be base, indeed," he said, "if I did not recognise and appreciate the loving kindness which not merely prompts those words, but which has watched over and nurtured me so long. But I have thought over all you have just desired me to reflect upon; I have pictured to myself the scene

which you have raised up before me; and I still think it right to go through with the task which I have set myself, and to attempt at least to perform what I still conceive to be my duty. If I fail, we three shall not be the less strongly knit together. If I succeed——"

"If you succeed, you will regain your father's love, but you will not permit him, however much cause he may have, to teach you to hate me," said Mrs. Entwistle in a broken voice. "You will have to bear with me for such a very little time."

"I am not likely to forget," said Gerald, kissing her cheek, "that when I was forsaken by him, you proved my friend."

"When do you intend going to Spring-side, Gerald?" asked Rose.

"If your friend is not able to gain me an interview this week, which I fear there is now little chance, I shall certainly go on Monday next."

"Monday next," repeated Rose to herself; "that would give me plenty of time to write again to Madge, if she felt that her intercession could now do us any good."

Just about the time that Gerald Hardinge announced his determination to his two companions, Mr. Philip Vane rang at the outer door of the house in Piccadilly, in which Mr. Delabole's chambers were situate. Admitted by the hall-porter, who rang a bell on hearing for whom inquiry was made, Mr. Vane ascended to the first floor, where he was received by Fritz, and informed that Mr. Delabole expected him. The valet added that his master was dressing for dinner, but that he had given orders to be told of Mr. Vane's arrival.

Indeed, Philip Vane had scarcely seated himself in an easy-chair, and taken up the evening paper, in which he turned by force of habit to the money article (though he had come straight from the City, and was probably at least as well informed about what had been going on there as the writer), when Mr. Delabole's jolly voice was heard from the inner room; and Fritz having opened the door of communication, Philip passed through and found his friend in a gorgeous dressing-room, with his short black hair standing straight on end awaiting the attention of the valet.

"What a luxurious dog it is," said Philip Vane, sardonically, after he and his friend had exchanged greetings. "He is absolutely too rich and too idle to brush his own hair!"

"Not at all, dear boy, not at all," said

Mr. Delabole. "He is never too rich or too idle to comb anybody else's hair, if he thinks they want it done for them, and to use a particularly small-toothed rasper for the occasion. As for his own hair, the manliness of his figure is so much developed, that he finds he cannot get conveniently at the back of his head, and is obliged to call in artificial aid."

"You sent me a line to the City, saying you wished to see me here. I presume you have something of more importance than your hair to talk to me about?"

"My hair is of the utmost importance to me, my dear Philip," said Mr. Delabole, placidly, "but I do not expect you to take equal interest in it. That will do, Fritz; if you will put out the rest of the things I shall not want you any more. Now," he continued, when the valet had left the room, "I can tell you what I wanted to see you about, as it is not my habit to chatter before servants. You recollect the conversation we had at the office immediately after my return from my little country trip?"

"I am not likely to forget it," said Philip Vane.

"You will recollect my mentioning to you the necessity of our getting Mr. Irving to join us, and the impossibility of our doing so unless he saw his friend Sir Geoffry Heriot's signature to our registered memorandum of association?"

"I recollect it perfectly."

"That signature is not yet there, I think," said Mr. Delabole, pausing in the act of tying his cravat, and looking round at his friend.

"See here, Delabole," said Philip Vane, under his breath. "Do you know what you are asking me to do?"

"To help yourself to a handsome wife with sixty thousand pounds. Nothing further that I know of."

"You have a hold over me in that matter, and you know it," said Vane, "but be careful how you——"

"Doctor Asprey is at the door," said Fritz. "Will you see him?"

"By all means," said Mr. Delabole. "Show him up." Then turning to Vane, he said, "Mind you sit him out. This matter must be decided to-night. Well,

doctor, how are you, and where do you bring all that dust from?"

"From the Great Western Railway generally," said Doctor Asprey, who looked tired and travel-stained: "I just looked in on my way home from the station to see if you were going to dine at the half-yearly audit of the Friendly Grasp to-morrow?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Delabole. "We shall meet there. But where have you come from?"

"From Springside. My old fellow-student, Chenoweth, who was with me at St. Vitus, and is now in leading practice at Springside, telegraphed to me for a consultation, and I went down yesterday."

"Who is your patient, doctor?"

"An old Indian officer, a certain Sir Geoffry Heriot. A man of mark in his time, I believe, though his time is nearly over now."

"You consider it a bad case, then?"

"Couldn't well be worse. Cannot possibly live more than a few days—heart disease and other complications. Well, I must be going; we shall meet to-morrow. Good-night, Mr. Vane." And the doctor took his departure.

"You heard what he said," said Delabole, as soon as the door had closed; "the old man cannot live. This reduces the risk to nil. The signature would be supposed to have been obtained while we were at Springside. Luckily there was no lawyer, nor any one else in Sir Geoffry's confidence. Do you see your way to it now?"

"Certainly more clearly than I did," said Philip Vane, in a firm voice.

JUST PUBLISHED, THE
**EXTRA DOUBLE NUMBER FOR
CHRISTMAS, 1871,**

ENTITLED
SLAVES OF THE LAMP.

Now ready, price 5s. 6d., bound in green cloth,

**THE SIXTH VOLUME
OF THE NEW SERIES OF
ALL THE YEAR ROUND.**
To be had of all Booksellers.

The Right of Translating Articles from ALL THE YEAR ROUND is reserved by the Authors.